

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT — MEETING I SUMMARY

OCTOBER 15, 2014

A focus group made up of 69 members participated in a Community Discussion on Wednesday, October 15, 2014. The group identified the strengths, accomplishments, achievements, and challenges of the Arlington Public Schools as well as the economic opportunities and challenges due to the geographic location and make-up of the district. Group participants included parents, community members, board members, administrators, and staff.

Feedback received:

I. What points of pride, accomplishments, and achievements, has the district realized?

- NeSA test scores
- State ranking
- Facilities
- Security of Building
- Community Involvement
- Special Education program
- Pre-K Education
- Other communities coming to Arlington
- Student/Teacher Ratio
- Facility Improvements
- Reputation – i.e. local, regional and national news
- Above average test scores
- Relationship with/ St. Paul's
- High number of Option-In students (Bus travels to Fremont)
- High Graduation Rates
- Teacher retention and advanced degrees – Barry Jurgensen
- High number of college credits available to students
- High degree of caring
- High percentage of graduates receive scholarships
- High percentage of parent engagement
- Small town community
- HAL program – elementary included (Study Buddy Program)
- Special Education program
- Pre-School Program
- Day Care Program

- Teacher of the year award – Mr. Jurgensen
- Test Scores
- Number of students that attend and graduate college
- Number of students that option into the district
- Special Education program that is provided
- Percentage of students involved in extracurricular activities
- Enhances community to be together on one campus K-12 and is a convenience for parents (minimizes transitional stress)
- Steady enrollment rates
- High caliber of teachers, administrators, and continuing education
- Technology
- iPad use in classroom
- FBLA
- Amazing Teachers!
- Pre-School
- Eagles' NEST
- Contribution of school to rating as one of the best small towns to live in
- High Achievement
- Competition
- Voted 2<sup>nd</sup> best to raise kids
- Additions to building
- Beautiful hallways! ☺
- Well known
- Lots of option enrollment
- FBLA!
- Fire Department interest
- Lots of offerings
- State scores
- Small classes and close community relationships
- Starting a preschool and after-before childcare (needs expansion)
- Technology
- Renovations
- Acknowledging test scores
- Involved community
- Reputation and services provided
- Technology
- Teacher's willingness to help and additional support
- Modern facilities
- State NeSA scores
- Education levels of current teaching staff

- Availability of dual credit courses
- Use of technology
- Quality of Special Education services
- Low student: teacher ratio
- Preschool and afterschool programs

## II. What challenges will the district face in the next three to five years?

### **Academic Performance/Programs**

- Lack of vocational skill courses
- ESL
- Keeping small class teacher: student ratio
- Up-to-date curriculum that is challenging and makes them ready for college
- Preparing students to face a very diverse world outside of Arlington
- Ever changing graduation requirements or requirements for college
- Character education – beyond elementary
- Educating students on finances at an early age
- Student/Teacher ratio as district grows
- No summer school
- Student to Teacher Ratio
- Keeping up with the needs of ALL students
- Possible growth of Special Education population
- Technical availability outside of school training
- FFA – more vocational opportunities
- Shared services if special teachers are not available
- Offerings/Rural environment with option
- Technical/Trade classes!
- Agriculture offerings FFA
- Maintaining classroom excellence – low and high achieving students
- Willingness to change - extracurricular –look hard at legacy organizations and activities
- Co-op with other districts
- Trend in Business = 1:1 and mentoring

### **Budget/Finance**

- Funding
- Stagnant enrollment
- Competitive benefits package for teachers
- Budgeting/Funding
- Trying to not increase taxes and still have funds to operate
- Being aware of available grants
- Questions on Option-In enrollment
- State/Federal Aid? property taxes
- Keeping Up
  - Facilities
  - Technology
  - Student /teacher ratio
  - Financially
  - Safety
- Financial stability

### **Building and Grounds**

- Deteriorating Mechanical systems
- Sub-par sporting facilities
- Landlocked campus will complicate expansion
- Keep buildings a safe place
- Aging facilities in high school/maintenance issues
- Building maintenance /new facilities
- Space – One Building
- Growth vs. facility
- Infrastructure

### **Parent – Community Relations**

- Reimplementation of continued education (adult)
- Communication with community
- Keep community engaged

### **School Climate/Learning Environment**

- Family economics and dynamics
- Drugs and weapons – safety of students (crossing guards)
- Security both physical and cyber
- School safety
- Potential language barriers

- School pride – community service for students helps to grow pride in community
- School district is the communities identity

### **Staff**

- Staff retention? (travel costs, daycare in same spot, teacher compensation compared to NeSA scores –average pay)
- Being able to retain quality teachers and administrators
- Retention of teachers
- Keeping good staff – too much turnover

### **Support Programs**

- Expansion of before/after school care

### **Technology**

- Student engagement with technology
- Keeping current technology available for students
- Keeping up with technology
- Technology
- Need more technology classes
- Keeping up with technology
  - 1 to 1?
  - Internet Access
- Keeping up with technology/balance and funding
- Technology – IT Department
  - upkeep of school's technology
  - instruction
  - readiness at graduation

### **Transportation**

- Transportation – bussing
- Ongoing bussing issues



III. Identify the economic opportunities and challenges due to the geographic location and the particular make-up of the district.

- No business taxes to help school district due to the flood
- Perils of economic development
- More economic growth into the community
- Proximity to Omaha
- Creative fundraising
- Manageable growth
- Lack of business//industry (taxes)
- Grant research/apply
- Technology
- Community teachers
- Bedroom community/very limited businesses
- Need to grow our downtown
- Develop merchant Association/Chamber of Commerce
- Limited housing
- Transportation issues
- Hard to draw businesses due to proximity of Omaha/Fremont
- Large geographic area for size of school
- Potential growth of tax base = stabilizing of funding
- Job opportunities in short driving distance
- School to work opportunities
- YAY ARLINGTON!
- Reliable web service due to location?
- Estate Planning/Foundations/for donations for specific projects
- Lack of affordable housing limits families/teachers from moving to community
- As student population becomes more diverse, more will be needed
- Spending tax dollars wisely in a falling commodity environment
- Students option out of the district (problem)
- So close to larger cities makes it hard to keep businesses in town
- Need to grow the district and bring more people to town
- Older population on fixed income – can't pay higher taxes
- How do we determine what the priorities are for spending money?
- Lack of Grocery Store/business
- Aging Community Properties
- Option enrolment (good and bad)
- Lack of Donor Business (benefactors)
- Loss of population to cities (kids come back!)

- Lack of Ag programs
- High graduation rates (opportunity)
- College credit in H.S.
- Grow interest in students participation in Vocational/Technology programs

**Arlington Community Engagement Meeting II - Wednesday, November 5, 2014**